

Why protect and enhance your community forest?

*A tree ordinance can help protect and enhance the benefits of your community forests by establishing a permanent and official tree protection policy. Ordinances establish municipal authority over public trees; set standards for tree planting, maintenance and management; outline enforcement, fees and fines; and define nuisance conditions on private trees.*

*Environmental, social, and economic benefits flow from a healthy, well-managed community forest. Healthy community forests:*

- *reduce air and noise pollution,*
- *save energy by shading and cooling,*
- *furnish habitat for wildlife,*
- *enhance aesthetics of a property, and*
- *contribute to community image, pride, and quality of life.*

Fostering Community Support

Fostering community support is absolutely critical to ensure ordinance effectiveness. The community needs to be centrally involved in the ordinance process, from development and implementation to the evaluation of its effectiveness. Successful tree ordinances rely upon citizens’ support.

Before you start drafting an ordinance, develop a working relationship with interested civic groups:

- tree board or tree commission
- community clubs, such as garden clubs and the Women’s Club
- local chapter of Keep America Beautiful
- environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club
- heritage or preservation societies
- neighborhood associations
- homeowners’ associations

Balancing community interests and values

A well-crafted tree ordinance can help keep water and air clean, provide wildlife with food and cover, improve the appearance and livability of neighborhoods, enhance property values, and spur economic growth. Achieving multiple goals requires balancing

How community members get involved

Join the tree board or tree commission.	Attendance at meetings allows a dialogue regarding the status and needs of the tree ordinance.
Contact your planning board.	Ordinances are often reviewed by planning and zoning commissions and are then recommended to city or county commissioners. Discussions with the planning commission can facilitate ordinance implementation.
Establish dialogue with commercial developers.	Implementation of an ordinance requires the input and support of commercial developers (homebuilders, realtors, and general contractors). Early dialogue is most beneficial.
Contact city and county officials.	Passage of an ordinance will be enhanced if appropriate city and county officials are involved in the process: city council members, mayor, city and county managers, county commissioners, city or county arborist.